

## Blackthorn helps combat illegal file-sharing at the University of Louisville

### Case study

**Industry sector**  
Education

**Challenge**  
Management of a structured disciplinary process intended to deter students from illegal file-sharing.

**Solution**  
Blackthorn enables staff to keep a log of all copyright infringement incidents, identifying multiple offenders so that disciplinary action can be taken.

**Benefits**  
A more streamlined process enables IT staff to police networks more effectively, reducing the risk of fines or legal action by copyright holders. Support for collaborative working improves productivity.



Finding itself on the frontline in combating illegal file-sharing, the University of Louisville wanted to streamline its response to on-campus copyright infringement incidents. Using Blackthorn, staff can now work more efficiently and collaboratively to track the disciplinary process for students who have broken copyright laws – avoiding heavy fines.

The University of Louisville is one of the largest universities in the United States with over 26,000 students across its three Kentucky campuses. Founded in 1798, it is one of the country's oldest educational institutions and offers degrees in over 70 fields of study.

Since the recent introduction of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, the University – along with other U.S. educational institutions – now has a legal responsibility to proactively discourage its students from unauthorised sharing of copyrighted material such as music, films and TV programmes. In practice, this means following up every infringement notification from copyright holders and associations that represent them, such as the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). Then appropriate disciplinary action can be taken to dissuade offenders.

"The consequences of failing to respond effectively to copyright infringement incidents include heavy fines and even losing our eligibility for federal student aid," remarks Lisa Cooper, IT Security Analyst at the University.

"For this reason, it is critical that we have a structured process for identifying and disciplining offenders – and can demonstrate this to copyright holders if necessary."

### Maintaining data integrity

However, with 10-20 infringement notices each day, the paper-based tracking system used by the University's Information Technology department was proving time-consuming and inefficient. "We needed to establish an incident management database to streamline the process and help us respond to each infraction appropriately," says Cooper. "We also wanted to be able to identify multiple offenders so we could take suitable disciplinary action."

The University had originally installed Blackthorn to support the effective management of all types of security incidents – for example, hacking, password/network violations, email misuse, stolen equipment and legal matters such as open records requests. However, it decided to look at other vendors' offerings when selecting a database solution to help it manage its response to copyright infringement incidents.

According to Cooper, the ability to maintain data integrity singled Blackthorn out from its competition. "Once data is entered into Blackthorn it can't be altered. This is obviously critical if the information is to be used as legally admissible evidence," she comments. "No other software vendor we spoke to could offer this guarantee on integrity of information."



*“Once data is entered into Blackthorn it can't be altered. No other software vendor we spoke to could offer this guarantee on integrity of information.”*

Lisa Cooper  
IT Security Analyst  
University of Louisville

### Flexible partner

Staff at the University performed a straightforward installation of Blackthorn on their own. However, when it became clear that an enhancement to the software could improve the incident management process, they turned to QCC for help. “We wanted the software to automatically open a ‘case’ each time we receive copyright infringement notices by email,” explains Cooper. “This would make it impossible for us to miss any notifications as well as saving valuable time.” QCC worked closely with the University to provide a software enhancement that would meet its precise needs. Cooper was impressed by the company’s collaborative approach. “QCC staff were very responsive to our feedback and delivered exactly what we asked for,” she confirms. “Their flexible attitude and excellent customer service have allowed us to use Blackthorn to its full potential.”

### Streamlined working

Now, each time a notification is received, IT staff log all actions taken in Blackthorn. These could include face to face meetings to explain the illegality of certain file-sharing activities, or email warnings sent to repeat offenders informing them of disciplinary steps such as suspension of network access. At each step, Blackthorn makes a high-integrity record of events which supports accountability should any actions be subjected to subsequent legal challenges.

*“QCC is a great partner and continues to provide excellent support.”*

Brenda Gombosky  
Director of Enterprise Security  
University of Louisville

Real-time information can be accessed quickly and easily using an at-a-glance dashboard with a range of charts. And if the University is obliged to report on its response to a particular infringement incident, it can produce a tailored report to demonstrate actions taken in compliance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act. In addition, permission-based access to Blackthorn enables the University to share details of specific cases with copyright holders – without revealing the rest of the data stored in the database.

### Improved collaboration

As well as making infringement tracking more efficient, Blackthorn also helps IT staff to work more collaboratively. Online access to the solution enables numerous colleagues – both inside and outside the department – to check the status of a particular case and see immediately what actions have been taken.

“Easy access to incident information means that we can function better as a team,” comments Cooper. “This enables us to fulfil our legal obligations by managing investigations more efficiently. And we have more time to spend on other tasks.”



### Meeting the challenge

Use of Blackthorn has now been extended to the University’s Human Resources department, enabling staff to track disciplinary cases more efficiently. Meanwhile, IT staff continue to work closely with QCC to refine the copyright infringement incident management process.

“QCC is a great partner and continues to provide excellent support,” concludes Brenda Gombosky, Director of Enterprise Security at the University. “With their help, we are meeting the copyright compliance challenge now faced by universities worldwide – policing networks to eliminate illegal file sharing.”

#### About Blackthorn

*Blackthorn is an out-of-the-box solution for managing all activities related to sensitive operations and issues.*

*It's a straightforward and highly secure approach to integrating key functions within your business into a single, coherent database of information that can give true clarity on operational risk.*

#### Further information

To find out more about Blackthorn, contact us now on [blackthornmail@qccis.com](mailto:blackthornmail@qccis.com) or +44 (0)20 7353 9000.



**QCC Information Security Ltd • Buchanan House  
24-30 Holborn • London EC1N 2LX • UK**

**Tel: +44 (0)20 7353 9000**

Email: [info@qccis.com](mailto:info@qccis.com)

Web: [www.qccis.com](http://www.qccis.com)

‘Blackthorn’, is a registered trademark of QCC Information Security Limited in the United Kingdom. Information on ‘Blackthorn’ can be found at [www.qccis.com](http://www.qccis.com). Other company, product and service names may be trademarks, or service marks of others.

This case study illustrates how one QCC customer uses the ‘Blackthorn’ technology. Many factors have contributed to the results and benefits described in this case study. QCC does not guarantee comparable results. All information contained herein was provided by the featured customer. QCC does not attest to its accuracy.

This publication is for general guidance only. Information is subject to change without notice. Please contact QCC Information Security Ltd. or its authorised ‘Blackthorn’ reseller for latest information on ‘Blackthorn’ or other QCC products and services. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature, without prior written permission of QCC Information Security Ltd, except for fair dealing under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act.

© Copyright QCC Information Security Ltd. 2011. All Rights Reserved.

QCC-MKTG101221a-MS-Case Study Louisville University-v0.1